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## Pastoral Politics in the Poetry of Jacques-Auguste de Thou (1553–1617)

“No shepherds, no pastoral.” If one were to apply this strict condition formulated by the American critic Leo Marx (Gifford 1) to Jacques-Auguste de Thou’s substantial corpus of Latin poetry—it consists of well over three hundred poems of varying length and scope, their composition dates running from his school days in the 1560s to the actual day of his demise on 17 May 1617—then only two pieces would bear classification as traditional pastoral poems. They are the *Iolas prior* and the *Iolas alter* featuring in BnF, ms Dupuy 460 (ff. 105<sup>r</sup>–106<sup>v</sup>, 107<sup>r</sup>–109<sup>v</sup>), the prime manuscript collection of de Thou’s *Poemata*, in the section to which Samuel Kinser gave the promising descriptor “erotic and pastoral poems” (236–237, here 237). With a little more lea-way, allowing for the inclusion of the piscatorial variant (see Grant 205–220), two further pieces (featuring in the preceding section of “poems to friends”) can also be classified as eclogues, i.e. *Sirenes. Ad Vidum Fabrum Pibracium* (ff. 85<sup>r</sup>–87<sup>r</sup>) and *Ad Mariam Barbansonam Caniam. Piscatores* (ff. 87<sup>v</sup>–89<sup>v</sup>). Unedited, none of these four poems have yet been subjected to any critical study and it is therefore apt that they should form the core to our present investigation.<sup>1</sup> Before we discuss these poems in chronological order, however, it must be pointed out that de Thou’s four eclogues are also manifestations of a broader poetic concern with nature, the countryside, gardens (nature tamed), and what one could more generally term a “pastoral colour.” It will serve our interpretation well if we first spend some time gauging this context of rural lyricism and the roles—aesthetic, political or both—it fulfilled for de Thou and his band of poeticizing friends.

<sup>1</sup> In the absence of a critical edition (for which plans are being made), all quotations and references are based on the readings of ms Dupuy 460.

### I. Between Town and Countryside, Between Fiction and Reality

It is a risky undertaking to relate the pastoral sensibilities of any poet to the realities, rural or otherwise, of his time. On the other hand, there is justification for such a quest in the fact that primarily through the study of Virgil's *Eclogues* Renaissance readers and writers had gradually learnt to appreciate how various personal, political and poetic meanings could be integrated into a single discourse.<sup>2</sup>

In the case of Jacques-Auguste de Thou, it is worth bearing in mind that de Thou was in the first instance a city-dweller. Born and raised in Paris into a family of the elite class of magistrates and office holders, the so-called *noblesse de robe*, and at first destined to a career in the Church, his professional identity was closely associated with the capital's religious and administrative centre: Notre Dame, the *Parlement*, and the royal Court when it resided at the Louvre all lay within walking distance of his family home in the parish of Saint-André-des-Arts on the Left Bank of the Seine. Just like many others of their caste, however, the de Thou family also owned country estates or *seigneuries*, which are currently located on the outskirts of Paris, incorporated even into the urban sprawl of the metropolis: apart from status and income, such estates provided an alternative place of residence, especially during the summer months, or when an individual needed to withdraw from the world, for instance to mourn a loved one, to recover from illness or to sit out a spell of political disgrace. Travel for educational, leisurely, or professional and diplomatic purposes provided other opportunities to explore different landscapes or to visit friends, fellow nobles, and princes in their own estates.<sup>3</sup> De Thou shared this very mobile life-style with many other writers of his time, who blended and appropriated images and commonplaces drawn from Horace as well as from Virgil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics* to extol the salutary effect of a simple, rustic way of life, which was deemed propitious to love and amusement, or to study, friendship, and moral virtue. Indeed, the 1570s and early 1580s saw a flurry of rustic celebration, especially in the circle surrounding Pierre de Ronsard and the already elderly Jean Dorat, and de Thou was clearly caught up in this movement (Brunel, I: 244–55; II: 1206–47).

The year 1583 provides a useful snapshot. In that year, Dorat's friend the *parlementaire* Claude Binet published a small collection of poetry in French and Latin by a variety of authors, entitled *Plaisirs de la vie rustique et solitaire*. Binet's anthology was dedicated to Jacques-Auguste de Thou's brother-in-law Achille de Harlay, who had recently succeeded Christophe de Thou (Jacques-Auguste's father) as First President in the *Parlement* of Paris. Moreover, it formed part of a broader constellation of texts all published by the same Parisian printer, Pierre Le Voirrier, acting for the widow of Lucas Breyer. This printer also issued (i) a reprint of Ronsard's Bacchic *Voyage d'Hercueil* (written in 1549), (ii) an edition of Guy Du Faur de Pibrac's moralistic *Quatrains* which also included Pibrac's *Les Plaisirs de la vie rustique* and Philippe Desportes's *Ode sur le plaisir de la vie rustique*; and (iii) the fourth edition of Nicolas Rapin's *Les Plaisirs du gentilhomme champêtre*.<sup>4</sup> In turn, this last work also contained (for the second time) de Thou's own rustic poem *In arcem Mallianam scazon*, "On the château of Maillé"; de Thou had composed this poem on the occasion of his visit to the Duke of Anjou's residence during an outbreak of the plague in Paris, and Rapin had provided a successful French verse translation for it.

De Thou's association with Rapin's rustic corpus has been fully documented by Jean Brunel (as noted above). What is less well-known, is that Jacques-Auguste de Thou himself was the addressee of one of Binet's own poems, a Latin composition sporting the alluring title *Brasiliae Nympha*.<sup>5</sup> During the heat of the Dog Days, "the Nymph of the Bresle" (a river on the border between Picardy and Normandy) darts playfully through the glassy waters of her eponymous stream, its banks adorned with woodland and orchards. In the second part of the poem the poet expresses the hope that two contemporaries will be able to join him near the Bresle: first, "Fumaeus," that is probably Martin II Fumée (c. 1540–c. 1590), a translator and historian who was in the service of the Duke of Anjou as a *gentilhomme de [s]a chambre*, and secondly "Augustus," or Jacques-Auguste de Thou himself. Significantly, Binet alludes to de Thou's didactic poem on falconry, one of the nobility's preferred rural pursuits, of which the first full edition was to appear at Paris in 1584.

<sup>4</sup> See art. "Breyer (Girarde Roffet, veuve de Lucas I<sup>er</sup>)," in: Renouard, fascicule Breyer, 59–65 (here 60–63 [no. 46–49]) and Lorin Petris' introduction to Pibrac (ed. Petris), especially 88 and 128–129. For a brief discussion of this group of texts from a different perspective, see De Smet, *Thuanus*, 165, 170.

<sup>5</sup> In full: *Brasiliae Nympha. Ad Cl[arissimum] V[irum] Iac[obum] Augustum Thuanum Senatorem* (Binet, f. 21<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of Sannazaro's renewal of the pastoral tradition, see Kennedy, 149–58 (especially 153), and Patterson, ch. 2.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the de Thou family estates, see De Smet, *Thuanus*, 35–39 and Chapter III, *passim*.

In Biner's poem, however, the shaded—and hence secluded—*locus amoenus* of the Bresle is briefly and typically, but nonetheless tellingly, associated with a reprieve from war: "Sic Vulcanus aquis Phoebus prohibetur et umbris, / Ut tuto hic Martem poscat amica Venus" (Binet, f. 21<sup>r-v</sup>). (Thus Vulcan is kept away by water and Phoebus by the shade, / So that Venus may safely demand the company here of her lover Mars.)

The pastoral mode had by then a long tradition of presenting itself as an antidote against war and chaos (witness for instance Jean Martin's preface to his French translation [Paris, 1544] of Sannazaro's *Arcadia*<sup>6</sup>). Nonetheless, the political instability of the French Wars of Religion (1562–1598) and the actual ravages caused by battles, skirmishes and raiding armies upset the traditional dialectics between town and country with a particular force. The risk of military action could make the countryside distinctly unsafe: the forests are now the "safe homes of brigands" (*forestas [domicilia tuta brigantum]*), scoffed Remy Belleau in his macaronic denunciation of the pillaging *reîtres* (German, i.e. Protestant, mercenaries), the *De bello huguenotico* (first printed in 1573) (Belleau 104, l. 49).<sup>7</sup> Almost paradoxically, some felt more secure in the city, behind ramparts and in the vicinity of their royal or noble patrons. Thus, in or shortly after 1583 Jean Dorat expressed his thanks to Claude Gauchet for sending him a copy of *Le Plaisir des champs*.<sup>8</sup> Initially, Dorat admits, Gauchet's poem had almost convinced him, old and frail as he was, to migrate to the countryside; but then the poet thought better of it:

...aulæ atque urbis transfuga pene fui,  
Cum me venantum non cornua classica, sed me  
Bellantum quibus (heu!) nunc strepit omnis ager,  
Rursus in urbanas fugitivum egère latebras  
In quibus imbellis bellica tela fero.  
Perque dies, magis et per noctes mille tumultus

<sup>6</sup> "Pour le moins j'ay fiance que plusieurs gentils hommes et dames vivans noblement en leurs mesnages aux champz, et autres de moindre qualité, luy feront assez bon recueil, veu mesmement qu'elle ne traicte guerres, batailles, bruslemens, ruines de pays, ou telles cruautés enormes, dont le recit cause a toutes gens horreur et compassion, et melancholie [...]. Tel subject, a la verite, n'est conforme a ceste Arcadie [...]" (Sannazaro 20).

<sup>7</sup> Note that the *Dictamen metrificum de bello huguenotico* opens with a burlesque evocation of the *topos* of Mars and Venus' love-making, which allows for a temporary armistice.

<sup>8</sup> On Gauchet's *Plaisirs*, see Hulubei 622–25.

Horresco cava quos bellica canna facit.  
Ut male dispareat quisquis malus otia pacis  
Disturbans populos civica ad arma vocat!  
Nos tamen interea solemur carmine curas,  
Tu Gauchete meis cantibus ipse tuis.<sup>9</sup>

(I had almost become a fugitive from court and city, when the horn calls not of hunting parties but of soldiers, with which (alas!) the countryside now resonates, made me take refuge again in my urban hideaway [i.e., Dorat's house near the porte Saint-Victor], where I, unfit for war, must suffer war's assaults. All day long, and even more at night, I am horrified by the thousand bangs produced by war's hollow cane [i.e., guns]. May every scoundrel who disturbs the peace and calm by calling the people to civil strife, come to a dismal end! In the meantime, however, we soothe our worries with your poem, and may you, Gauchet, find consolation in our poem about yours.)

It is clear from Dorat's poem, as well as from the very short quotation from Binet's *Brasilæa Nympha*, how real life intrudes in the pastoral imagination: in the context of the troughs and peaks of the Wars of Religion (and their aftermath), the bucolic poet readily moves in and out of the fictional world created by the pastoral muse. And it is bearing this in mind that de Thou's own pastoral discourse, which is primarily a discourse of retreat and of the search for restoration, must be read.

## II. The Siren-Call of the Pastoral Mode

De Thou's pastoral poem *Sirenes. Ad Vidum Fabrum Pibracium* (*The Sirens, to Guy Du Faur de Pibrac*) (ms Dupuy 460, ff. 85<sup>r</sup>–87<sup>r</sup>) is a fairly mannerist piece in which on a moon-lit night the narrator is privileged with the sight of three Sirens emerging from a river. One of them recounts how a Barbarian people (i.e. the Turks) forced her to leave the Aegean Sea for the Tyrrhenian; she then swam out of the Mediterranean altogether, through the Straits of Gibraltar and along the inhospitable coast of Portugal and Galicia. Taking refuge in the port of Blaye, the mermaid made her way up the Garonne river from Bordeaux to Toulouse, where she was caught by a fishing Pibrac. (If this appears quaint, it is worth remembering that de Thou would soon, in his *In arcem Mallianam*,

<sup>9</sup> *Ad Claudium Gauchetum* (Dorat, *Poëmata*, Poematum lib. III, 226). Reprinted in Dorat, *Œuvres poétiques*, lxiv. I have made some alterations to the punctuation.

*scazon*, mention fishing as one of the pleasurable activities a nobleman could pursue in the country.)<sup>10</sup> Thereupon the Siren decided to give up her aquatic surroundings in order to roam nymph-like through the Southern French landscape. And whenever Pibrac felt called to play the pastoral pipe, she says, he brought (Orpheus-like) nature to a halt. Now, however, the incantation is under threat as fire will rage over the mountain passes, and even across the water. With this the Siren's address comes to an end. Dawn is near and the poet calls his friends to wake up, and to go to the pastures with him.

By sketching in broad cartographical brushstrokes the Siren's journey from the Aegean to Provence, the poet evokes the idea of the *translatio studii* (and in particular the transfer of the art of poetry) from the Greco-Roman world to Renaissance France—pointedly by-passing the civilization on the Iberian Peninsula. A curious role reversal is at work: de Thou's Siren has become ineffective as the enchantress known in the Homeric Odyssean tradition (she is unable to hold the attention of sailors: *canitur nam fabula surdis* [ll. 34–36]<sup>11</sup>). Instead, and as an allegorical figure, she takes up with an alternative tradition where Sirens represent knowledge and are associated with the Muses (Tucker, 60–61, 260–61). Moreover, as de Thou reassigns the ability to beguile to his addressee (*Sirenium tum voce loqui, tum carmine blando / Diceris, & magicis animos urgere susurris*, ll. 85–86), Pibrac is said to outdo the pastoral figures “Andinus Lycidas” (l. 88) and “Tityrus Vindocinus” (ll. 88–89). The latter allusion is the clearest: Tityrus is none other than “Ronsard vandômois” whom Pibrac had evoked in his *Plaisirs de la vie rustique* (Pibrac [1583], 21). As to Lycidas, the adjective “Andinus” refers to Andes, a village near Mantua, and thus to Virgil, “the Mantuan poet of ere” whose portrayal of the honey-bees in *Georgics* IV Pibrac similarly extols in his *Plaisirs* (Pibrac [1583], 20). De Thou's use of “Andinus,” however, also allows the reader to identify Lycidas with the “Angevin” poet Du Bellay, who authored only one truly pastoral poem, the Latin *Votum rusticum Iolas*,<sup>12</sup> but whose other poems often display a more general pastoral sentiment through the poet's yearning for the smoking chimneys of his native Anjou. Finally, de Thou's eclogue also hails Pibrac as

<sup>10</sup> *In arcem Mallianam, scazon*, ll. 66–68: “Seu iuivit ima fluminis tua ripa / Captum dolosa trahere linea piscem, / Iactumque retis emere nummuli iactu.”

<sup>11</sup> Perhaps de Thou intends a contrast with Arethusa, the pastoral muse of Virgil's Tenth Eclogue: “non canimus surdis” (*Ecl.* X, 8).

<sup>12</sup> Du Bellay's *Iolas* is a paganized celebration of a religious feast and annual fair held on 8 September at Notre-Dame-de-Marillais (Hulubei, 451–2).

a worthy heir to “Xenius Mycon,” “who led the Muses hither from the mountains of Auvergne and who aspired to the great honours of the Ancients”; it concerns the influential chancellor Michel de L'Hospital (Greek *xenos* = Lat. *hospes*) who allegedly was born at Chaptuzat, near Aigueperse in the Auvergne (now Puy-de-Dôme).<sup>13</sup> L'Hospital had initially studied at Toulouse (in Pibrac's neck of the woods, so to speak), and had died on 13 March 1573, just one year before Pibrac published his *Plaisirs de la vie rustique*. Pibrac's unfinished poem initially ended (in the 1574 edition) with the pessimistic foretellings of the shepherd Michau (= Michel, Mycon) of the “cinquiesmes orages” (i.e., the fifth War of Religion, 1574–76) just before his death (Pibrac, *Les Plaisirs* [1583], f. 28<sup>r-v</sup>; Pibrac, ed. Petris, 243–4, ll. 528–54).

Through de Thou's mention of L'Hospital, the poem's agenda passes from the purely literary to the political: L'Hospital's Latin poetry had created a natural bond with the likes of Ronsard and Joachim Du Bellay, who had praised his prudence and creativity (Ménager; Simonin, 440). Above all, in the course of the *troubles civils* L'Hospital had become a (controversial) figurehead for the party of moderates, the so-called *politiques*, who sought to reconcile the tensions between Catholics and Protestants. However, de Thou's *Sirenes* did not follow immediately upon the first editions (Lyons, 1574/Paris, 1575) of Pibrac's *Plaisirs* (composed in 1573) nor was it itself a product of a sojourn in the countryside. Its place and date of composition, Paris, 1 May 1579, put it firmly in an urban and political context, i.e. shortly after de Thou started his own career in the Parisian *Parlement*. This eclogue is de Thou's first attempt to style himself as a disciple of Pibrac and thus indirectly of Michel de L'Hospital; it serves to inscribe him in that particular group of cultured *robins*, to whom Pibrac also belonged and for whom the joys of the countryside and pastoral poetry were, as is suggested in the enjambment of ll. 78–9, “sweet moments of retreat amidst the daily business” (*interque negotia dulcis/secessus*). Befittingly, then, the mood of the poem is one of suspense and instability, not only because of the theme of the itinerant water nymph, but also through the narrative's beginning at nightfall (l. 14) and its ending at the crack of dawn. The mental state of the poet, errant at first (*dum vagor*, l. 18) and then stargazing (i.e., not intent on the firm realities of earth) near the water-edge (suggesting flux) (ll. 18–21), is akin to that of a dreamer. In this context of

<sup>13</sup> Michel Simonin, however, contests this location, arguing that the L'Hospital family did not yet possess their domain at Aigueperse and that L'Hospital was born “dans un lieu à déterminer” (437).

uncertainty, the end of this pastoral panegyric is particularly unsettled, as the final words of the Siren ring with disquiet (ll. 99–107):

Sed mihi quae dubium vertit sententia mentem?  
 Invidia infelix rumpor! Jam claudite rivos  
 Custodes Nymphae nemorum, jam claudite saltus;  
 Ille acreis oculis flammam jaculatur & ore;  
 Carmine si vestras semel excantaverit aureis,  
 Nequicquam saltus & flumina nota petetis:  
 Per saltus namque ignis edax errabit, & undas  
 Sub medias vaga flamma ibit. vos discite nostro  
 Naiades casu, sit quanta potentia amoris:  
 Uni fas mihi sit tantum insanire furorem.

(But what thought perturbs my anxious mind? Wretch that I am, I'm broken by envy! Nymphs, who guard the forests, close off the streams, close off the clearings; he launches sharp flames with eyes and mouth; once he has bewitched your ears with his song, you will look in vain for the clearings and rivers you knew. For over the clearings an all-devouring fire will rage, and the spreading flame will even go amidst the water. You, Naiads, learn from our case how great is the power of love. May it only be me to rave with such fury!)

What kind of envy should threaten the Siren, Pibrac's rustic "muse"? What is this all-devouring fire? At the time of the eclogue's composition, Pibrac was chancellor to Marguerite de Valois, Queen of Henri de Navarre: the chancellor was rumoured to be in love with her, but would soon be accused of having betrayed her interests. However, it would have been extremely indelicate on de Thou's part to allude to an inappropriate attachment on Pibrac's part. It is more likely that the Siren is envious of the call of duty and other concerns which take Pibrac away from her; the fire that wells from his eyes and mouth could be a reference to his various political *harangues et remonstrances*.<sup>14</sup> In the love-mad discourse of the Siren, meaning explodes into a polyphonic finale as the fervour of love and rhetorical power turns into the image of an unstoppable forest fire—a metaphor for the political division and military devastation,<sup>15</sup> which Pibrac himself had evoked in terms of conflagration at the very beginning of his *Plaisirs de la vie rustique*: "Lors que Garonne on veit

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Cic. *Brut.* 24, 93: "omnis illa vis et quasi flamma oratoris."

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Cic. *Fam.* 16, 11, 2: "incidi in ipsam flammam civilis discordiae vel potius belli."

*couverte de fumee / Et du brandon civil la Gascongne allumee*" (Pibrac, ed. Petris, 204, ll. 13–14).

Indeed, not only the opening but also the colophon to Pibrac's *Plaisirs* indicated that the poem had been written against a background of warfare: "whilst Henri de Valois (the future Henri III) laid siege to La Rochelle with a hundred canon." However, the death of Pibrac's son, who had embarked on a military career, would for ever leave Pibrac's bucolic poem unfinished (Pibrac, ed. Petris, 255, ll. 738–44).<sup>16</sup> De Thou, like Pibrac, is all too aware that pastoralism is never final; it is but an interlude. Just as the shepherd must at daybreak return to the pastures and tend to his herd (*Sume pedum Meliboee, in pascua, lucet, eamus*, l. 112<sup>17</sup>), so the poet must return from his rest in the countryside to the business of politicking, magistracy, and—all too often—war.

### III. Fishing for Eros

Instability and dreams are also crucial elements of de Thou's second eclogue *Ad Mariam Barbansonam Caniam. Piscatores* (ms Dupuy 460, ff. 87<sup>v</sup>–89<sup>v</sup>). This poem, however, is of an altogether different ilk, because unlike the three other pastoral eclogues it concerns the poet's private life. (In Leonard Grant's typology this would be classed as a "personal eclogue.") The poem first begins with an address by the poet to his beloved, Cania. This is de Thou's first wife, Marie de Barbançon-Cany whom he married in 1587 but lost in 1601. The poem's affectionate beginning and the references to Marie's chastity and maidenhood suggest the poem was written before their marriage, during the couple's courtship and betrothal (1586–7), though this is by no means certain.

The poet claims to have seen Marie in his dream, and this prompts him to address to her the ensuing dialogue between two fishermen, the *piscatores* of the title. Indeed, the first, named Battus, anxiously recounts to his friend Amyntas how he dreamt he had caught a golden fish. Assuming the rare catch to be sacred to Neptune himself and regarding the dream as a premonition,

<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting that although Pibrac returned to his poem, adding 50 lines as a *Continuation des Vers sur les plaisirs de la vie rustique*, this extension too would be both the result of stolen moments, and interrupted by political events: "L'auteur estant après à continuer cest œuvre à heure perdue, il fut contraint de le laisser, à cause du départ soudain de Pologne, pour la nouvelle de la mort du Roy Charles neufiesme" (Pibrac, ed. Petris, 258).

<sup>17</sup> *Sume pedum*, "take your crook," is a borrowing from Virg. *Ecl.* V, 88.

he vowed never to go fishing again. Amyntas retorts with an account of how he is himself "hooked" by his love for a water nymph, and how his own dreams are filled with longing for his beloved's embrace. He shows how unfounded Battus's decision is to give up fishing (his livelihood) on the basis of a dream, which should have no bearing on his waking life.

The poem owes a heavy but unacknowledged debt to the Greek *Idyll* XXI, commonly attributed to Theocritus.<sup>18</sup> From it, de Thou has taken the scene of two old and impoverished fishermen discussing dreams and concluding that dreams are not to be believed. Though de Thou's fishermen have received new names, at times the allusions to Theocritus are so close we could speak of a translation. Compare for instance ll. 14–32:

Una forte duo tuguri sub paupere tecto  
 Fessi a piscatu obscura sub nocte jacebant:  
 Frondens his paries pro fulcro, his arida fessum  
 Sustinet alga latus; iuxta instrumenta marini  
 Venatus, funes stragulae hami retia setae,  
 Levibus è iuncis intertexti colathisci,  
 Vimineae nassae, fracta ad retinacula cimba  
 Prae senio rimas faciens, brevis insuper illis  
 Pulvillum capitis storea, pannosaque vestis,  
 Et tegumen contra brumosos pileus imbreis.  
 Hic omnis miseris labor haec opulenta supellex.  
 Aulula nulla illis, nullus canis; omnia vasta,  
 Nulla hominum vicinia; tantum litore curvo  
 Molliter attonsis alludit fluctibus aequor.  
 Et iam nox medium caeli confecerat axem;  
 Surgit uterque senex ad opus durumque laborem  
 Sedulus; urget enim paupertas improba Battum.  
 Addita egestati cura acrior urit Amyntam.  
 Suspiciens caelum Battus prior ora resolvit.

<sup>18</sup> It is this *Idyll* which inspired Sannazaro's *Piscatoriae*. Belleau too took inspiration from it as well as from Sannazaro for piscatory eglogues in his *Bergerie*. *Idyll* XXI was translated into French by Amadis Jamyn: "Le Songe d'un Pescheur" in: Jamyn, *Les Œuvres Poétiques* (Paris: R. Estienne, 1575), f. 224<sup>v</sup> (Hulubei, 621).

with Theocritus:

Two ancient fishers once lay side by side  
 On piled-up sea-wrack in their wattled hut,  
 Its leafy wall their curtain. Near them lay  
 The weapons of their trade, basket and rod,  
 Hooks, weed-encumbered nets, and cords and oars,  
 And, propped on rollers, an infirm old boat.  
 Their pillow was a scanty mat, eked out  
 With caps and garments: such the ways and means,  
 Such the whole treasury of the fishermen.  
 They knew no luxuries: owned nor door nor dog;  
 Their craft their all, their mistress Poverty:  
 Their only neighbour Ocean, who for aye  
 Bound their lorn hut came floating lazily.  
 Ere the moon's chariot was in mid-career,  
 The fishers girt them for their customed toil,  
 And banished slumber from unwilling eyes,  
 And roused their dreamy intellects with speech:—  
 [...] <sup>19</sup>

However, whereas Battus's dream of a golden fish is a Theocritean borrowing, de Thou has added new dimensions through his introductory address to Marie de Barbançon, and Amyntas's oneiric pining for a nymph. It is in the expansion and differentiation that I believe we must seek the significance of de Thou's *Piscatores*.

As in his previous eclogue to Pibrac, de Thou proceeds through an exploitation of ambivalence and suspense, which in some ways is inherent to the pastoral mode as a borderland between rural reality and urban longing. Just as the Sirens of his first eclogue were half human, half fish, so the fishermen Battus and Amyntas are through their occupation creatures both of dry land and the sea. The beachside setting (... *tantum litore curvo / Molliter attonsis alludit fluctibus aequor*, ll. 26–7) of their dialogue constitutes the changeable boundary between the *terra firma* and the liquid unsteadiness of the sea. Their topic of conversation, the trustworthiness of dreams, similarly veers between the

<sup>19</sup> Quoted here in the translation by the nineteenth-century English poet Charles Stuart Calverley (1831–84).



anchorage of dreams in the day-to-day reality of the dreamers' existence and the status of dreams as an elusive figment of the imagination.

Amyntas, then, functions as the poet's piscatorial *alter ego*; his name vaguely recalls de Thou's title of *sieur d'Emery* (*Aemerius*, in Latin), whilst Amyntas's longing for the water nymph is a *mise-en-abyme* of de Thou's own dream in the poem's introduction. Amyntas's vision thus lends an element of carnal desire, even an erotic drive (*Sic mens insolitis . . . motibus aegrum/Exaggitans corpus, violentum prodit amorem*, ll. 102–3), to de Thou's dream of Marie de Barbançon.<sup>20</sup> If the poet of the introduction dreams of the lovers "joining hands and mingling in conversation," further union is only fulfilled in Amyntas's dream, where the girl seems "to seek out [his] embraces and join her lips to [his]"; fisherman and nymph are "wrapped around each other more tightly than ivy around a tree" (*Non bedera ilicibus lascivior haeret & ulmis/Quam nos complexus per mutua cinximus arto*, ll. 111–12). As a result, the actual theme of the piscatorial dialogue exceeds the avowed aim of the poem formulated in the introduction (ll. 9–10), which was blandly to demonstrate the transience of dreams, and indeed of life itself: "Umbra hominum vita est; umbrae quasi somnia vana: / Gaudia praetereunt nunquam remeabilis aevi." (The life of men is but a shadow; shadows are like futile dreams; moments of joy pass in an age that can never return.)

In other words, the pastoral narrative is not a pale mirror image of the opaque "reality" of its framework; it sheds new light on it, and brings it into focus. It can be said that Marie's own apparition to a sleeping de Thou is further explored through Amyntas's oneiric longing; when Amyntas declares that Battus has not committed sacrilege by catching a sacred fish in his dreams (*Sacramenti violati/Hautquaquam reus es*), the principle is equally valid for dreams of sexual desire and commerce. De Thou thus implies that erotic dreams are not in themselves reprehensible: the experience belongs to the night and not to the day, the time of work and labour; it is not immoral but *a-moral*, or morally indifferent. In de Thou's day, this was a message that could only be conveyed subliminally, via the no-man's land of the pastoral mode, and wrapped in a Theocritean veneer.

<sup>20</sup> There are in fact other instances in de Thou's writings where he discreetly alludes to his sexuality. See De Smet, *Thuanus*, 109–111, 135n.

#### IV. A Shepherd Royal and his Mistress

De Thou's final eclogues *Iolas prior* (ms Dupuy 460, ff. 105<sup>r</sup>–106<sup>v</sup>) and *Iolas alter* (*ibid.*, ff. 107<sup>r</sup>–109<sup>v</sup>) leave behind the sphere of his personal life, although like the *Piscatores* they too serve to tackle under a pastoral cover a delicate moral issue to do with desire. In the first of the two eclogues Nice laments that rich Iolas has foolishly allowed himself to fall in love with Lycisca. The affair ill becomes his greying temples and silver beard, and the poem ends with the poet reinforcing Nice's wish that Iolas may soon come to his senses: he should renounce all thought of Lycisca and tend to his herds and flocks. The *Iolas alter* revisits the forbidden love of Iolas for Lycisca. Lycisca has died, however, and much of the poem is spent convincing Iolas that his passion had been misplaced, and that he should stop mourning her decease.

In ms Dupuy 460 the two *Iolas* poems are placed immediately after the amatory verse of de Thou's youth, poetic exercises without any demonstrable link to real situations or persons. However, the two eclogues are anything but idle explorations of shepherds' dalliances in an atemporal, pastoral utopia. A little detective work soon reveals a remarkable topicality. Through the mention of the Garonne (the river in which Pibrac caught his Siren!), the Loire, the Cher, the Rhône and Seine rivers in the first poem, the character of Iolas is firmly associated with a French context of national rather than of regional proportions. Moreover, the fact that a copy of the *Iolas alter* survives amongst the papers of the diarist Pierre de L'Estoile (Kinser 231) suggests that both poems might have had a subversive, political angle too (L'Estoile's taste for stirring pamphlets is well-known).

Yet who might the protagonists of the eclogue be? The pastoral name *Iolas* has indeed been associated with several grand personages: the eponymous Iolas of Du Bellay's *Votum rusticum*, for instance, may have stood for Jean Olivier bishop of Angers (Hulubei, 451). In 1574, a Latin eclogue, entitled *Livia*, by Antoine Fumée, sieur de Blandé (uncle to the Martin Fumée mentioned in Binet's *Brasiliae Nympha*), featured an Iolas mourning the death of his Livia: the poem was meant as a consolation for Henri III's grief for his beloved, Marie de Clèves, Princesse de Condé, who died giving birth to her husband's daughter (and without having ceded to Henri's advances) (Hulubei 676–7; Grant 322–3). De Thou's mature and greying Iolas, however, corresponds less to Henri III than to his successor Henri IV. Iolas's beloved Lycisca, then, hides Henri's mistress Gabrielle d'Estrées, whom Henri planned to marry after the dissolution of his childless marriage to Marguerite de Valois

(Jouanna, Boucher, Biloghi and Le Thiec, art. "Estrées"). The prospect had split the courtiers into two camps: those who sought the favour of the king's mistress, and those who found it problematic that the marriage should legitimize Gabrielle and Henri's bastard son, César (born in 1594), as heir to the throne. César is no doubt the "filius" mentioned in l. 91 of the *Iolas prior*; rumour had it that he was in fact fathered by Gabrielle's other lover, Bellegarde.

There can be no doubt about de Thou's position on the matter of Henri's affair with Gabrielle. Always a champion of carefully considered marital and hereditary politics, de Thou is less than complimentary about Lycisca/Gabrielle: her Grecian name, for instance, corresponds to a diminutive of the Latin *lypa*, she-wolf or "whore." (In fact, the exploits of the female members of the Estrées family had led Gabrielle's own father to refer to his household as a *clapier à putains*... [art. "Estrées"].) Lycisca's aunt, who the poet says acted as a procuress (l. 58), is perhaps none other than Madame de Sourdis,<sup>21</sup> the mistress of de Thou's own (widowed) brother-in-law, Chancellor Philippe de Cheverny. It is doubtful that Henri IV ever laid eyes on the first, moralizing eclogue: in the sole surviving manuscript version, the text of the *Iolas prior* begins mid-line and it is possible that de Thou abandoned the poem before putting the finishing touches to it.

On the other hand, its sequel indicates that the first poem was not entirely forgotten. The *Iolas alter* was evidently prompted by Gabrielle's unexpected death in April 1599 from the complications of a still birth (a striking parallel with the death of Henri III's beloved Marie de Clèves). A reference to Gabrielle's château at Montceaux (l. 75) removes any doubt as to the subject of the eclogue. The poet encourages Iolas/Henri IV to stir from his mourning (which in fact the King did very soon, turning his eyes to Henriette d'Entragues and rashly promising to marry her): *mors omnia jura absolvit* ("death releases one of all promises"), the poet claims with a variation on Virgil's famous aphorisms, the *omnia vincit amor* of the *Eclogues* and the *labor omnia vincit improbus* of the *Georgics*. Just as, for the fisherman Battus of de Thou's *Piscatores*, his awakening discharges him from the sacrilegious catch and foolish oath made in his dream, so Lycisca's/Gabrielle's death marks a passage to reality:

<sup>21</sup> However, another anonymous poem inserted into L'Estoile's diary (*incipit*: "Mariez-vous, de par Dieu, Sire!") describes the royal mistress as "Putain, dont les sœurs sont putantes/Comme fut la mère jadis,/Et les cousines et les tantes,/Horsmis Madame de Sourdis" (my italics) (L'Estoile, 178).

it discharges the King from a liaison which was not only adulterous but also went against the common good.<sup>22</sup> Instead, there is now the more realistic prospect of a new interest (*nova cura*, l. 78), a more worthy flame to be provided by "the swan-filled Tiber and the Arno." This is of course Marie de Médicis; despite her Florentine background, which in the past has proved pernicious for the French,<sup>23</sup> the poet is confident that she "as a first-time mother will bestow on you [Iolas] the true title of 'father' and strengthen your dynasty with noble off-spring." D'Estrées's death allows the return of the true Astraea (l. 94); the King's remarriage to Marie de Médicis will restore true pastoral leisure: *Illa serena dies nostris dabit otia campis* (l. 108).

### Epilogue

A quick glance at de Thou's later poetry does indeed suggest that his advice to the King was sound, as we now see the magistrate devote his poetic talent to botanical themes, producing poems on the cabbage, the violet, the lily, the wallflower (phlox), marjoram and broom (*sparte*) (De Smet, "*Thuanus ille philiat*"), which their editor Paul Reneaulme specifically qualified as resulting from sojourns in the countryside (notably at de Thou's *seigneurie* of Villebon-sur-Yvette). De Thou pointedly dedicated two of these poems, the *Ion*, sive *Viola* of 1608 and the *Phlogis* of 1609, to Henri IV's second queen, Marie de Médicis, and a third, the *Lilium* (1608?), to the "regius infans," their son and heir, the future Louis XIII. In doing so, the *Lilium* and *Phlogis* clearly linked the idea of leisure in the countryside to the return of law, order and peace, as the following lines from the beginning of the *Phlogis* (with a gesture towards Virgil's *Georgics*) demonstrate:

At tu, quae diri post longa decennia belli,  
Post civile nefas, facis otia grata Camoenis,  
Arvaeque das pacata coli, cape munera ruris;  
Hortorumque deos mecum venerata potenteis

<sup>22</sup> L'Estoile describes d'Estrées's death in terms of *hybris* and divine intervention: "mort miraculeuse et de consequence pour la France, de laquelle elle [la Duchesse de Beaufort] estoit designee Roine, comme elle, peu auparavant, disoit tout haut qu'il n'y avoit que Dieu et la mort du Roy qui l'en peust empescher" (185–86).

<sup>23</sup> An unmistakable, snide allusion at the Valois dynasty and the controversial regency and influence of Catherine de Médicis.



Vertumnum, Floramque, verecundumque Priapum,  
 Francorum votis iam nunc assuesce vocari.<sup>24</sup>  
 Haec quoque pars nostri non aspernanda laboris  
 Debetur Regina tibi. Vos cetera Musae  
 Dicite. ...

(But you, who after long decades of harsh war and civil conflict bring leisure that is agreeable to the Muses and who let the fields, now pacified, be cultivated again, accept these gifts of the countryside. Accustom yourself with me, your majesty, to the powerful deities of the Gardens, Vertumnus, and Flora, and sleazy Priapus, being henceforth invoked by the prayers of the French. For this part too of our labours is not to be spurned, and is owed to you, my Queen. You, Muses, say whatever else there is to say.)

This fecund rural bliss, however, was not to last. The misgivings which de Thou had formulated in the *Iolas alter* about Marie de Medicis' fateful Italian origins would prove to be well-founded when in 1614 the French nobles, led by Condé, rose up against Marie and her Italian advisers Concino Concini and his wife Leonora Galigai: once again armies moved through the French country side.

At a personal level, too, the *Iolas alter* turned out to be prophetic. In the poem's introduction, de Thou had presented the composition of his eclogue as the fulfilment of a moral duty toward Iolas/Henri IV (*debemus carmina Iolae*, l. 5), at the risk of incurring Iolas's displeasure and even being forced into exile. De Thou did indeed provoke the King's annoyance, when the publication of his masterwork, the *History of his Own Time*, caused a diplomatic row with the Vatican. Moreover, soon after Henri IV's assassination, Marie de Médicis engineered de Thou's disgrace by refusing to appoint him to the First Presidency in the *Parlement*, so that de Thou saw himself enjoy rather more rural leisure at his country-house than he had first envisaged.

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Virgil, *Georgics* I, 42: ... et votis iam nunc adsuesce vocari.

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